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FOR INR/I AND AF/S

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [ZA](#)

SUBJECT: C-AL8-02739: FOLLOW-UP ON DIVISIONS WITHIN ZAMBIA'S RULING PARTY

REF: A. 08 STATE 134360

[B.](#) 08 LUSAKA 1135

Classified By: Ambassador Donald E. Booth, reasons 1.4, b/d.

¶1. (C) Embassy Lusaka is gratified to hear that Ref B was useful to Washington readers and is pleased to provide the follow-up information requested in Ref A.

¶2. (C) For the moment there appears to be no overt breakaway factions within the MMD. This may be in part because the avoidance of a party leadership race, as described in Ref B, allows would-be contenders to keep their cards close to their chest for the time being. If a party leadership race were held, those contenders might be forced to show their hand or risk being unable to run in the 2011 presidential election in Banda's place (if he decides not to run). Breakaway aspirations may also be stifled by the widely held knowledge that the opposition Patriotic Front (PF) will be a significant threat to the MMD in 2011; therefore, breaking up the party would almost ensure its demise as well as that of the breakaway faction. MMD's strength lies in its name's historical reputation for initiating multiparty democracy, and many rural voters remain loyal to the name. Sata has had little success attracting the loyalty of these rural voters away from MMD; breakaway factions would face a similar problem.

¶3. (C) It is worth recalling that PF leader Michael Sata broke ranks with the MMD when former President Frederick Chiluba chose Levy Mwanawasa as his successor over Sata. Sata's party is a personality-based one, virtually devoid of any policy platform, with a sprinkle of protest votes adding to its growth in popularity. MMDers wanting to leave the party to pursue a party leadership position (and potentially the presidency) are unlikely to want to serve in Sata's shadow. Other opposition parties (e.g., UPND, Heritage, UNIP) are too marginal to attract those with an eye on the presidential brass ring.

¶4. (C) Surprisingly, PF and UPND have failed to capitalize on the MMD's misbehavior, partly because of their own structural weaknesses. PF is wracked by its own internal divisions, as Sata has threatened to go to the High Court if the speaker of Parliament does not, in the next seven days, unseat 16 PF Members of Parliament who defied Sata's order to avoid participation in the ongoing National Constitutional Conference. (Comment: Interestingly, if the NCC were to proceed with recommending the president be elected by a 50 percent plus one majority, Sata could be the main beneficiary if PF and UPND could combine forces against MMD.) Sata unilaterally expelled the MPs from PF, which under the Zambian constitution would require by-elections in their constituencies (i.e. there is no crossing the aisle in Zambian parliamentary procedure). In addition to that legal case, the PF's request for a recount of the October 30 elections will be heard by the High Court January 21, undoubtedly keeping PF lawyers quite busy. UPND leader Hichilema has all but disappeared from the scene since the elections and is experiencing internal party discord as well -- the party's secretary general (a longtime personal friend of Hichilema's) was recently expelled for allegedly defaming Hichilema.

¶5. (C) The MMD internal divisions will undoubtedly be a distraction to Banda's administration, particularly while he tries to consolidate his power. Currently, we do not see any specific issues that will be sacrificed for political gameplaying, but the distraction will certainly impede general progress in a bureaucracy that struggles with productivity during the best of times.

BOOTH